

A Qualitative Study: Information and Communication Technology patterns and preference of seniors in metropolitan Bangkok, Thailand

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Abstract

The evolution of connectedness through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) enhance opportunities for interpersonal communication in elder users by linking people and their lives, making it easier to maintain social relationships. The objective of this study is to explore the changing communication patterns in Bangkok's senior community, specifically looking at social networking applications as LINE and Facebook. The participants were purposive sampling of 10 with the Semi-structured interviewers were carried out in Bangkok. The samples were sourced from locations where seniors 60 years old who are active and independently mobile have social activities, such as a stock trading room, an informal community center, and a sports and activities club. We find that the senior preferred in-person meeting, especially with neighbors, friends and family. They use both social network sites (SNSs) and a phone call in order to communicate with their family members or friends to arrange appointments. They use a SNS depended on their activities, objectives and who they have contacted to. SNS is a way to arrange meetings and reconnect with friends. It has become an important tool for rebuilding relationships with family and friends, maintaining engagement, and reducing isolation and loneliness. They prefer to use LINE rather than Facebook because they felt it is less complicated and more private. They are low online social network skills and capability for new technology. According to the limitation of the inability and slow learning curve in smartphone feature and applications, the seniors are capable of using less than the essential functions and a general perception that using technology is difficult and unsuitable. In order to reduce these limitations, the ICT and SNS have the potential to support communication for seniors and to enhance their ability to maintain social relationships.

Keyword: Social Network or Social Media, Information and Communication, Older or Senior, Internet.

INTRODUCTION

Urbanization and a growing aging population contributes to changing social relationships in a variety of ways. There is evidence that senior citizens have problems maintaining social relationships due to social isolation and social disengagement. Declining physical functions may limit their ability to get involved in a social network, which highlights structural deficits (McPherson et al., 2008; Farrugia, 2013). Holladay & Seipke, 2007 reported that seniors had limited opportunities for in-person communication with others. Using a phone to call others or accessing a social network site can diminish social isolation and maintain connectedness through computer-mediated communication (Harwood, 2000; Cornwell et al., 2008; Farrugia, 2013; Khosraviet et al., 2016). While seniors have traditionally been reluctant to use new technologies (Lee & Coughlin, 2015), access to information can allow participation in social relationships (Xie, 2008; Farrugia, 2013; Chan, 2014).

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enables using the internet to access, store, and exchange information. The National Statistical Office (NSO) of Thailand reports that in 2017, over 90 percent of Thai internet users went online via smartphone. In the capital city of Bangkok, more than 70 percent of the adult population used smartphones though overall mobile phone usage is higher, at 76.1 percent. Internet access and usage impacts on ICT effectiveness (NSO, 2019). Nevertheless, differences in social network preferences and interaction patterns challenge effective communication.